

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, AS

SUBJ: SNEDDEN'S POPULARITY RISES / PROSPECT OF EARLY
AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS DIMS

1. GALLUP POLL PUBLISHED IN JANUARY 19, 1974 EDITION OF THE BULLETIN MAGAZINE, SHOWS DRAMATIC RISE IN PERSONAL POPULARITY OF OPPOSITION LEADER BILLY SNEDDEN, POLL TAKEN IN MID-DECEMBER SHORTLY AFTER REFERENDA ON PRICES/INCOMES WERE DEFEATED IN NATIONAL VOTE. SNEDDEN'S POPULARITY INCREASED FROM 29 TO 46 PERCENT AMONG 2000 PERSONS ASKED. HIGHEST PREVIOUS SHOWING IN PAST SIX MONTHS BY SNEDDEN IN POLLS WAS 38 PERCENT. PM WHITLAM ALSO CONTINUES TO BE POPULAR DESPITE DROP FROM 48 TO 45 PERCENT IN SAME PERIOD.
2. IN SAME POLL, LABOR-COUNTRY PARTY RECEIVED PREFERENCE OVER ALP. L-CP PERCENTAGE REPORTEDLY HAS STEADILY INCREASED OVER PAST SIX MONTHS FROM 45 PERCENT TO CURRENT 50 PERCENT, WHILE ALP POPULARITY HAS DECLINED FROM 46 TO 43 PERCENT.
3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WHITLAM'S PERSONAL POPULARITY REMAINS FAIRLY STEADY, INCREASE IN APPROVAL OF SNEDDEN AND CONTINUED TREND OF POLLS IN FAVOR OF OPPOSITION WOULD SEEN TO MILITATE AGAINST EARLY ELECTIONS BEING CALLED BY PRIME MINISTER, A DECISION WHICH WILL DEPEND PARTLY UPON PM'S RATHER SPECIAL PERSONALITY. LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY NATIONAL

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ELECTIONS IS A FAVORITE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION AND WILL BE

THE CENTRAL ISSUE AS PARLIAMENT RECONVENES END FEBRUARY. SOME POLITICAL COMMENTATORS NOW FEEL THAT GOVERNMENT WILL NOT CALL ELECTIONS IN FACE OF NEGATIVE OPINION POLLS, AND THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL BE UNABLE TO AGREE UPON BLOCKING APPROPRIATIONS IN ORDER TO FORCE ELECTION. OUTCOME WOULD BE SERIES OF COMPROMISES UPON ALP LEGISLATION AND POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS UNTIL 1975. NOTE LIBERALS, COUNTRY PARTY AND DLP MUST VOTE TOGETHER IN SENATE TO BLOCK ALP, AND GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN SOME ABILITY TO PICK OFF ONE OR ANOTHER OF THESE PARTIES ON PARTICULAR ISSUES.

4. SNEDDEN'S IMPROVED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE IN OPPOSING PRICES/INCOMES REFERENDA (WHICH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DEFEATED) HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON HIS POLITICAL IMAGE, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE TEMPORARY. LIBERAL SOURCE STATES PARTY HAS DECIDED TO SPEND GOOD DEAL OF MONEY, INCLUDING RECOURSE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM, TO "TAKE SNEDDEN APART AND PUT HIM BACK TOGETHER AGAIN" IN ATTEMPT MAKE HIM ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATE PRIME MINISTER. WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THIS HAD ALREADY BEEN TRIED WITH FORMER PM MCMAHON, SOURCE INDICATED LIBERALS HAVE FEW ALTERNATIVES TO SNEDDEN AT PRESENT TIME.
END COMMENT.
HARROP

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